

# PORTLAND HARBOR SUPERFUND SITE

## ISSUE SUMMARY:

The Portland Harbor Superfund site is in the remedy design phase of the Superfund cleanup process. Approximately 75 percent of the acres designated for active in-water remediation are in the design phase. These designs are progressing without significant issues.

## UPCOMING MILESTONES:

- EPA will be completing settlement agreements to support cleanup.
- In FY21 and FY22, EPA will:
  - Get 100 percent of the site into active remedial design;
  - Continue working with parties performing remedial design activities as well as consulting with our state and tribal partners;
  - Engage with natural resource trustee agencies to develop a sitewide programmatic biological opinion;
  - Plan consent decree negotiations with DOJ; [Non-public information: EPA sent a pre-referral to DOJ in January 2021];
  - Conduct a dioxin/furan background study; and
  - Develop tools to manage site environmental data including:
    - A data management plan and portal; and,
    - An information management and institutional controls (ICs) plan.

## BACKGROUND:

- The Portland, Oregon, site encompasses a 10-mile stretch of the Willamette River located just downstream of the city's downtown area.
- EPA and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality began studying the site as a potential Superfund site in 1997. In 2000, EPA added Portland Harbor to the Superfund National Priorities List.
- The public health risk is associated primarily with consumption of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB)-contaminated fish. The most predominant contaminants in sediments and riverbanks are carcinogenic PCBs, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), dioxins and furans, and breakdown products of the herbicide DDT.
- In January 2017, EPA issued a final record of decision (ROD), in which the agency selected a combination of dredging, capping, enhanced natural recovery and monitored natural recovery to address contaminated sediment. EPA estimates the cleanup will cost \$1.17 billion and will take 13 years to complete.
- In December 2019, EPA issued an explanation of significant difference to the 2017 ROD to adjust the final PAH cleanup levels due to toxicity information changes. This adjustment did not affect either the cleanup's substantive scope or its duration.
- EPA has identified more than 150 potentially responsible parties, including private companies, the Port of Portland, federal agencies, the state of Oregon and the city of Portland.

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- The site has been divided into 18 project areas that are generally based on location, the nature and extent of contamination in the area, and PRPs.
- To date and in conjunction with the site's remedial design work, EPA has signed 11 administrative settlement agreements and orders on consent (ASAOs) and issued two unilateral administrative orders.
- EPA is conducting remedial design in two project areas where PRPs were not readily identifiable. These areas represent approximately 8 percent of the site that requires active remediation.
- [Non-public information: Region 10 is in the final stages of negotiating an ASAO for the Swan Island Basin project area. This will bring 100 percent of the site requiring active remediation into remedial design, of which over 90 percent will be under enforcement agreements or orders.]

## KEY EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS:

☒ Congress   ☒ Industry   ☒ States   ☒ Tribes   ☒ Media   ☒ Other

Federal Agency ☒ NGO   ☐ Other (name of stakeholder) \_\_\_\_\_

- Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley; Representatives Earl Blumenauer, Suzanne Bonamici, Greg Walden and Kurt Schrader
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, State of Oregon
- The Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation, The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, and The Nez Perce Tribe
- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (National Marine Fisheries Service and the Natural Resource Damage Restoration Division)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- The U.S. Department of the Interior (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- City of Portland
- Port of Portland
- Environmental organizations (Audubon Society, Willamette Riverkeeper), Portland Harbor community advisory group (site-specific, self-directed community organization) and Portland neighborhood associations

## MOVING FORWARD:

- The current remedial designs, under the existing agreements, will take four years to complete.
- EPA plans to begin consent decree negotiations in 2023 to ensure a seamless transition from design to cleanup.
- EPA estimates that the actual cleanup effort itself will take approximately 13 years to complete.

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LEAD OFFICE/REGION: HQ-- OSRTI/OLEM, OSRE/OECA, OGC

REGION 10—SUPERFUND AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION (SEMD), OFFICE OF  
REGIONAL COUNSEL (ORC)